

Concise news story

Wellington chocolate company marks 11 years since kitchen startup

Kahurangi Chocolate Co. has come a long way from its beginnings in a rented Wellington kitchen with second-hand equipment. Over the past 11 years, it's grown into a full-scale chocolate manufacturer with dedicated teams handling innovation, marketing, sales and supply chain operations.

CEO Marcus Reid founded the company with a single promise: to never put something on a shelf he wasn't genuinely proud of. The company has just launched its newest product, Kōpura, a 70% dark chocolate bar with freeze-dried New Zealand berries.

"That sounds simple. It's actually the hardest thing to hold onto as a business grows," Reid said during a launch event on Friday evening.

The new product represents 18 months of development work. It started when Reid asked Head of innovation Hemi a straightforward question: If you could make anything, with no constraints, what would you make?

"He didn't hesitate. He said: a dark chocolate bar with real fruit. Not flavouring. Not extract. Real fruit, done properly," Reid said.

The development process included eight recipe iterations, sourcing conversations with berry growers, and extensive testing of freeze-drying techniques and berry ratios. The final product contains four ingredients: dark chocolate, raspberries, blueberries and blackberries.

Consumer testing earlier this year revealed consistent language amongst participants. "They called it the real thing. Not our customers. Not people who were paid to say something nice. Strangers, tasting a product for the first time, reaching for the same words independently," Reid said.

The CEO acknowledged multiple teams involved in bringing Kōpura to market, including Hemi's innovation team, Priya's marketing team, Elena's sales team, and Sarah's supply chain team.

"We weren't just launching a new product. We were making a statement about what this brand stands for," Reid said.

The launch event marked the first time anyone outside the company tasted the new chocolate bar.